

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 03098 191222Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5576

UNCLAS COLOMBO 3098

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: INDIRA GANDHI ON EMERGENCY

1. SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI ADDRESSED INDIANS LIVING IN SRI LANKA AT INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER'S RECEPTION AUGUST 17. SHE SPOKE PRIMARILY ON DOMESTIC MATTERS, NOTABLY THE EMERGENCY WHICH, SHE SAID, HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY RELAXED. PRESS CENSORSHIP WAS ENDED. MANY FORMERLY DETAINED HAD BEEN RELEASED BUT CONTINUED THEIR OLD TACTICS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI, IN COLOMBO TO ATTEND NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT, TOOK TIME OUT FROM INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS AUGUST 17 TO ATTEND RECEPTION AT INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER'S RESIDENCE AND ADDRESS INDIANS RESIDENT HERE. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT, SHE DEALT MAINLY WITH DOMESTIC CONCERNS, ESPECIALLY THE EMERGENCY, WHICH SHE SAID HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY RELAXED. JUSTIFYING HER CONTENTION THAT EMERGENCY WAS NOT AS RIGID AS BEFORE, SHE CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS NO PRESS CENSORSHIP AND PRESS GUIDELINES HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY LOOSENED.

3. SHE CRITICIZED FOREIGN PRESS AND DOMESTIC PRESS ALIKE, CHARGING THAT FOREIGN PAPERS HAD EVEN SUGGESTED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 COLOMB 03098 191222Z

THAT TANKS WERE PATROLLING THE ROADS. INDIAN PRESS HAD

BEEN MOST UNFAIR IN THAT ANYTHING ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT WAS PUBLICIZED WHILE GOVERNMENT DID NOT GET SPACE FOR ITS VIEWS (NOTE: COLOMBO PRESS REPORT IS UNCLEAR BUT LATTER COMPLAINT MUST SURELY REFER TO PRE-EMERGENCY CONDITIONS).

4. MRS. GANDHI WENT ON TO SAY THAT MOST PEOPLE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY UNDER EMERGENCY HAD BEEN RELEASED AND "ONLY A FEW" WERE STILL UNDER DETENTION. HOWEVER, THOSE RELEASED HAD REVERTED TO THEIR OLD TACTICS.

5. SHE REVIEWED THE VIOLENT AND UNDISCIPLINED PRE-EMERGENCY DAYS AND SAID THAT INDIA'S PROBLEM TODAY WAS HOW TO MAKE THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE TO THE NATION WITHOUT FORCING THEM TO DO SO. "A COUNTRY'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON ITS PEOPLE. PRIME MINISTERS MIGHT COME AND GO BUT THE STRENGTH OF A NATION IS IN THE HANDS OF HER PEOPLE."
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